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The Black Cat

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SAPOLIO

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your housework go?
With greatest ease, sir, if you please,
I use Sapolio!

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The Black Cat

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The Turn of the Earth.*

BY A. WALTER UTTING.

HE strayed into the hotel lobby like a lost pup, a tattered individual redolent of long country walks and haphazard meals, face bronzed by the elements, and characteristics of the experienced. Leisurely he regarded the register, his countenance not changing until his eye caught the name of a man well known in the West and not a stranger in the East.

"Mr. Walton in?" he asked the clerk.

The lord of the establishment turned to the key-rack. "He is," he replied. "What name?"

"Spivins — Jim Spivins."

"Front! Ah, there he is now. Never mind, Front," said the clerk.

Spivins advanced to meet a man his antithesis in appearance. "Ah, Walton," he whispered: "I want to have a word with you. Yes, sir; Jim Spivins. Met you first in 'Frisco, then in Paris, then stumbled across you in the Poets' Corner of the Abbey, and last met you in Chicago. Remember me? Spivins. Ah, you do! Have you time? I would be pleased to go to your room; yes, sir."

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Shoulder to shoulder they walked to the elevator, and Walton's suite was hardly entered before Spivins was unbending a loquaciousness which would have been appalling to Walton had it not interested him.

"You're wondering what I'm doing here? Just dropped in to see you. Here to-day; gone to-morrow, but I never forget my friends. Just want to keep you in touch with me. Don't want to interfere with your business; just to sound my barbaric yawp — as a stronger man has said — and then go on my way. Don't want you to talk: I can say enough for both of us; yes, sir.

"Travel, like wine, gives a hinge to the tongue. You said that when you wrote of your visit to the Poets' Corner. But, unlike wine, sir, travel serves. It lasts: lingers in the memory. And such memories as may come! For instance:

"There was that part of my life spent in Terdel de Rago, its beginning dating fourteen months ago and its ending just long enough back on the road of Time to permit my coming to New York. I shall never forget that time, for in it I spent the most delicious hours of my life: in it I reveled in Love's dream — awakened by no man's subtleness but by the powers most unexpectedly, almost unbelievably, exerted by Nature. It is of this I will tell you before I again lose myself in the Earth's mystic maze.

"You know me for a traveler. I have drank Marcobrunner in a Biebrich inn, at the exact place where Caesar crossed the Rhine when he made his second invasion. I have visited the battlefields of Boyaca and Carabobo, and traveled the route of Bolivar's march of 1819. I have tried to read the eternal question from the Sphinx. I have compared the natural wonders of Niagara and the Yellowstone with the falls of the Nyanza. The drear spots of Calcutta were not overlooked because I had beheld the joys of Naples. I have traveled. I know the topography of the earth pretty well. Concede my knowledge on that point; I know. Thank you. But never did I meet repose until I entered Terdel de Rago.

"It was natural for me to travel. I was born with the wanderlust. And it was as natural for me to unacquaint myself with the aptness of things. My present condition reveals my nature. I

am energetic, but my energies are often misplaced. I had the unhappy faculty of wanting to manufacture ice when in Alaska, and to make a new brand of steam-heating apparatus when in the tropics. Other men are more gifted — such a man as Juan Belgardo, for instance, who figures in my story of Terdel de Rago.

"He was not a handsome man. His head was bald as a tomato; his ears were like small cabbage leaves, and half his teeth were gone — from talking too much. His eyes were as black on the inside as a battered pugilist's eyes are on the outside. And, for a man of wits, he was extremely mean. Sir, he would not have given a five-cent piece to see an earthquake!

"He was energetic, however; a man of to-morrow working its destiny to-day. He knew the coign of vantage to behold the coin of the realm. He will never be blind, because he will always see the color of gold. I found that out before I had been in Terdel de Rago two weeks: as soon as I determined to court and marry Clarabel — who, by the way, made the spot attractive.

"I may say too much; I may become monotonous; but that is a human fault. What has gone before was necessary; what comes is, I hope, interesting. It is at least strange.

"I was not a poor man. Between misfits of commercial judgment I had made proportionate calculations. Trading in the South Seas had swelled the gains of toy exporting from Holland and ivory dealings in Africa. So I was able to buy a residence near the woman who had won my heart — my heart, sir, which had never turned toward woman! And I made a flourish with my wealth to correspond with the house and the vast estate in the rear. I entered the best society because Clarabel was to be met there. I was soon looked upon as a desirable suitor for her hand.

"There was another suitor, however; Juan Belgardo, although my coming set him back just when his courting had attained almost to the pinnacle of success. My wealth was greater than his, I might say, and modestly refrain from mentioning the fact that my good looks were also greater. And it was inevitable I should have fastened upon property abutting his, so that we could each tell every act of the other.

"I will not attempt to describe the charms of Clarabel. I could

rhapsodize. Such, sir, is the way of love. I wish to be as brief as possible. I found myself often in her company, and welcomed by her: Belgardo shoved aside to accommodate me, for which I gained his sincere enmity. And when I found diamonds on my property — as I did within six weeks — this enmity knew no bounds, especially when an investigation failed to reveal precious stones in his own property.

"Clarabel's joy was plain when my wealth was thus unexpectedly increased. It was simply, you understand, a case of finding diamonds where no one had presumed them to be. Digging for potatoes, I remember, brought them to light. I lavished gifts on the woman of my heart as soon as I saw these stones were to be had for the mere matter of picking them up; and after a while I arranged to have my property mined scientifically.

"Then Nature stepped in. I was away from home one day when the town was shaken by an earthquake. Some frail buildings were toppled over; much ground was disturbed. My own property was upheaved, as was Belgardo's. We were in the zone.

"And in Belgardo's ground, on my right, where no diamonds had been before, were now so many as to be lying loosely on the soil! Mother Nature had simply stolen them from me by her convulsive throw, and given them to my rival in love, for I was surprised to find no further trace of diamonds when having my estate inspected. Not one stone was to be found in the property which, before the quake, had contained countless gems.

"You, sir, being primarily a matter of fact man of business, will ignore the existence of luck; many men do. Many men blush at the thought of luck as they blush at the thought of facing the naked truth. But here was luck for both of us — good for him, bad for me.

"'Jim Spivins,' said Belgardo to me, shortly, 'I will now show you how to win Clarabel.'

"I laughed at him. Mankind, by laughter unadorned, must soon decay; a felicitous phrase, sir, that I myself coined.

"'You make love as energetically and inspiringly as a cow chews her cud,' I replied. 'You must show me.'

"But I had no intention of letting him show me. I courted my

fair one as sedulously as theretofore, if attention will replace the fervor of gifts. Presents I could not now make — my wealth had been lavished in attendance on Cupid.

"However, my idea was to tell of my reverses. Do not think I intended idly to sit and watch Belgardo gather the gems that had been mine. I knew — and he knew — that without financial backing my suit with Clarabel would be lost. Therefore, I resorted to Yankee logic. I visited a judge and obtained a writ asking Belgardo to show cause why the diamonds, which had been mine, should not continue as my property, and restraining him from digging for them.

"He brought the matter to issue in the courts. He had engaged the best lawyer in Terdel de Rago as his counsel, and helped him with argument in this strange case. And our battle was famous for new facts of Blackstone in that part of the world.

"I based my ownership of the diamonds an my previous possession and the transference of the property without my consent. The stones had not been given to him by me, I argued ; nor had he purchased them from me. And in making this claim I introduced, I believe, one of the most unique arguments ever heard in a court of justice.

"To these allegations his lawyer replied that the earth had owned the gems and had willingly given them to Belgardo.

"Discarding rhetoric, my counsel argued most logically that I had bought the diamonds when I had bought my land, and therefore they were mine by right of purchase. But his attorney parried this thrust with an application that staggered me. He insisted I should identify each stone. If I could sufficiently prove that this and that diamond had been my property, relinquishment would be readily and willingly made. He contended that Juan Belgardo had purchased a piece of ground known and recognized on the map as such a lot on such a block. Title had been clear. Consequently all property in that section specified and mapped thus belonged legitimately to him. If he wished to plant potatoes, it was his privilege to do so. He could build on every inch if he so desired. Or he could dig for diamonds if he liked. What he did with what was legally his own was none of my business.

And was it consistent with justice, argued his counsel, to suppose that, if, while he was digging for potatoes he should discover diamonds, he should be obliged to hand those diamonds to me simply because my ground failed to show presence of diamonds thought to be there ? Was this the understood interpretation of the law ?

" Technicalities were greatly in evidence. This case was as great a stickler as was the case of Shylock trying to get his pound of flesh, no more, no less, without spilling a drop of blood ; and in legal annals stands without a parallel for strangeness.

" My lawyer pleaded logically from my viewpoint. All he asked was that I be given that which, without my consent, had been taken from me. He said I wanted what was rightfully mine, but which I could not prove was lawfully mine. And my opponent's natural retort was that, as he had previously said, if I could identify the diamonds as those which had been imbedded in my property I could receive them.

" The court was puzzled. There was absolutely no precedent to guide him in the conduct of affairs. By granting equity to one he would be working a palpable unfairness on the other; and the environment was dedicated — so the tablets on the walls said — to justice.

" One thing was positive : Without the diamonds I would be a poor man, for my counsel fees were equivalent to the value of my estate — the case was worth the price. For myself, I cared not, save only that I must relinquish all thought of Clarabel — and that tore my heart.

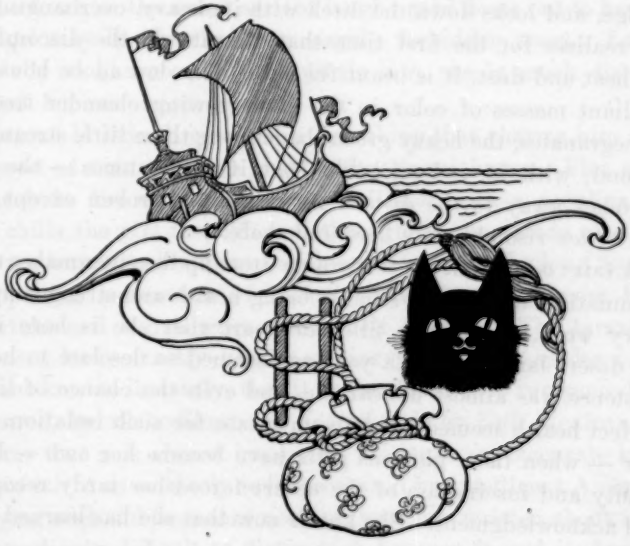
" I visited her once just to talk this matter over with her. Sir, I spoke plainly to her. 'If my suit is lost,' I told her, 'I will be a ruined man. I will be unable to marry you, much as my heart desires you. I would not pull you down to my level; a shiftless wanderer on the face of the earth. I can struggle as often as I have struggled, but my love for you must not let you suffer abasement.'

" So it was understood. Still, the decision was a heavy blow to me, for I was told that what was Belgardo's was his own to do with as he felt inclined. If Nature had turned burglar and robbed me, my only recourse for satisfaction was by identifying the gems

as those stolen from me. This was the law of the criminal courts; it must be the law in this case.

"That is why you find me here in straitened circumstances. That is why I am in New York, the Mecca of the hungry, the disconsolate, the failure. I still smile, but my heart aches. In time, perhaps, memories of Clarabel will become fainter and — Thank you, sir; I had no intention of borrowing a five-spot from you; I wished merely to tell you of myself, and to let you know of my past since last seeing you. We have met many times before — ah, the Marcobrunner of the Rhine! And we shall meet again. Meanwhile, this five-spot will help. When we next meet I hope we'll both be opulent.

"Have I detained you too long? Pardon me, but one will grow loquacious over fond memories. Well, as we used to say, I don't know where I'm going now, but I'm on my way."



The Ah-ki-e.*

BY K. H. STILWELL.

IT is four o'clock when she opens the door and steps out on the hard, clean-swept space in front of the low adobe house. The heat is still intense. Far in the west, the sun, sinking low, is slowly reaching the tops of the tall cotton-woods that fringe the banks of the river ; though the whole sky is yet a golden globe of heat.

Down the quiet street of the little town there is not a person to be seen, save at the extreme end an Indian woman and her three almost naked pappooses, sitting in the heavy shade, are eagerly devouring half ripe melons. Nothing moves or seems to live in the whole settlement but these Indians. The water in the irrigation ditches gurgles sluggishly along and, as she walks to the small bridge, and looks down the ditch with its heavy, overhanging trees she realizes for the first time that, despite all the discomfort of the heat and dust, it is beautiful here. The low adobe houses, the brilliant masses of color in the close-growing oleander trees and pomegranates, the heavy green shade along these little streams, and beyond, with its indescribably beautiful soft tones — the desert stretches away to the distant mountains, unbroken except where red buttes rise abruptly here and there.

A faint odor from the few orange trees up the river makes the dry stimulating atmosphere seem to bring health and strength upon its every wave. Gratitude fills her heart that she is here in this far desert land ; which a year ago seemed so desolate to her that existence was almost unbearable, and even the chance of life and perfect health seemed not to compensate for such isolation. Only now — when these glorious gifts have become her own — has the beauty and fascination of the desert forced her tardy recognition and acknowledgment. She knows now that she has learned to love it all.

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A soft low laugh startles her and turning quickly she looks closely toward the flat below the large canal. There in the cool shadow of the trees the fast-kicking legs of a small boy send a cloud of dust floating toward her.

That low laugh sounds like Manuel's, and passing along the shady ditch-path she quietly approaches. Yes, it is Manuel — dear little Manuel with his large dark eyes, his tender musical voice and caressing patois of Mexican, Indian, and English words. In this year of desert life these two have become dear friends and constant companions.

Manuel lives with the old priest, in whose care he was left when his mother died and his father went to the mines. He has his lessons with Father Anton every morning, but the rest of the time is spent in devotion to " my Senorita " as he loves to call her. Indeed he has so persistently used the term to mean exclusively the quiet, slender Miss Frances Doan from far away Massachusetts that gradually the whole community has come to accept that appellation as belonging only to Miss Doan, and few now recall her name. To them she is " Senorita."

She fears, as the sweet excited laugh again floats out to her, that Manuel may be absorbed in a sternly forbidden sport. Looking carefully as she goes softly towards him, she is much disturbed to find her suspicion correct.

Manuel is indeed engaged in something that charms him as the conquest of many rattlers charms the Moqui brave. Flat on his stomach he lies — his large eyes brilliant with a peculiar light that chills the girl through and through as she stands at a little distance watching him direct with swift touches of a long fine reed the opening movements of a battle between an enormous brown tarantula and a dull grey spider half its size. The tarantula's opponent looks exactly like an ordinary trap-door spider to her. But she knows, instantly, that it is the Ah-ki-e, so reverenced, and so feared, by all Indians. So feared is it by both Mexicans and Indians that it is almost impossible to obtain any accurate knowledge of it. And so rarely is it recognized by intelligent Americans studying such subjects that nothing has been written about it. It is exceedingly difficult to distinguish between it and its harmless cousin of the trap-door ; hence it escapes observation until even

its actual existence is questioned many times by Americans who have lived here only a few years. The few facts obtainable are put aside as parts of the impossible legends of the primitive Indians and ignorant Mexicans. But you do indeed hear weird tales of this ugly grey spider, all attributing to it strange powers of evil. These tales are so reluctantly told, and so strange and uncanny are they, that it is quite impossible to separate the fact from the fiction. Indeed the Senorita has found no other name for these spiders than the softly aspirated " Ah-ki-e " of the Indians.

Coming suddenly upon Father Anton and Manuel one day while riding out by the big buttes she was astonished to hear a harsh, threatening rebuke to the child ; and the stern commands that followed. It was then she first learned of these insect battles and nearly all she now knows of this strange spider.

It was not very clearly given and apparently with the greatest reluctance, as much, evidently, to excuse his seeming harshness to the child as to warn her of possible danger.

The priest really said very little. He insisted such spiders existed, and existed in large numbers, along the whole desert bordering Mexico, escaping detection because of their close resemblance to the common, harmless, trap-door spider ; that it was a fact that many strange and inexplicable circumstances many times accompanied its attack ; that its bite was only moderately painful and no immediate ill effect followed, a week or ten days passing always before any serious condition is indicated. It is always the same. At first a small bluish puncture and a little pain for a few hours — but all is soon forgotten. The days slip by with nothing in the physical condition to show that the terrible poison is slowly and surely working through the whole system. Then suddenly when in seemingly perfect health, the heart-spasms come and then follows the indescribable agony of the long death. Yes, the priest has seen several such deaths in the long years of his service here. Americans laugh — but from his own experience he has given her the truth.

" For some peculiar natures like Manuel's, Senorita, this spider possesses a strange fascination, especially when in combat with its natural enemy the tarantula. In these fights the Ah-ki-e always kills the larger spider, at least it rarely fails to kill it. If it

does fail — Oh well! there are many strange tales and certainly — " the old priest stopped abruptly.

All this flashes through the girl's mind as she leans forward to watch the boy and the fighting spiders. She recalls, too, the weird legends of this dull grey thing that she has, with difficulty, coaxed Manuel to tell her since that day out by the buttes. She remembers the efforts she has made to induce her Mexican friends here to describe these insect contests. They delight in describing the vinegarone and tarantula fights — they never tire of the subject, and offer to exhibit the exciting spectacle to her at any time she may desire to see it. But it has been impossible to induce them to give her any information of these other insect battles — there is, always, a strange reluctance even to speak of the Ah-ki-e. She knows full well that if an Ah-ki-e has made this dusty flat its home, then no tarantula is to be found near ; and Manuel has brought this huge brown one from down the canal or ditches on purpose for the fight — brought him in the old tin-can at her feet probably. Wretched boy ! How can he love to see these loathsome insects fight ? It is truly disgusting and she will stop it at once. She has told the priest she would.

But someway as she watches she forgets for a moment what it is that she must do — at once. She moves nearer and, as she watches the fighting, rolling, writhing things, there creeps over her a longing to take some part in it all, to share it someway.

The big tarantula seems to grow bigger and absorb power from all the earth. But the grey thing over there ? Why, it draws strength from beyond the earth ! Surely the grey spider's eyes are not like the eyes of any other created thing, for those tiny points of light hold her with force of many cords. The tarantula springs and tries to bite — he will get the dull grey thing ! No. There is the Ah-ki-e over there, and between them lies part of one of the big tarantula's legs. No need now for the guiding touches of the slender reed in Manuel's hand, for pain and rage possess the brown body of the tarantula. Slowly it draws up ball-like for an attack that shall mean death. This time the spring is clear and sure — but over there again — the grey thing rolls unhurt. Now larger grows that dull grey body and as the two rush forward, it twists suddenly to one side and another small portion is torn from the

big tarantula. Oh, she believes it now ! The tarantula will fight — fight until absolutely dismembered. The old stories of vinegarone and tarantula fights are true — true that they will fight until they literally tear each other in pieces.

Then she is on her knees beside Manuel watching — watching — watching. It is so wonderful she cannot understand it all. Again and again the big tarantula is torn, and fights on unchecked. Oh, this the perfection of power — this grey thing — and she is there, a part of it ! This is battle, glorious battle ! To fight — to tear — to rend — to conquer, ah, that is the joy of life and what life means ! She knows it now, at last. " Yes ! yes ! Go on — go on — go on — " she cries aloud.

How long it lasted she never knew, but always in looking back a life-time seemed dwarfed by comparison. Then slowly she realized that the torn, dismembered mass there on the ground is a dead tarantula, and here a dull grey thing is crouching, drawing up into a hideous ball and is going to spring at something. Oh, God! It will spring at *her*! She cannot move, she cannot breathe, for this is Death — this grey thing — and it has come for her ! ! Then some object is thrust between her face and the grey death — and all is dark.

The rough blows of Manuel's little hands and his sharp cries bring her back to consciousness. In the soft warm twilight they come slowly home — these two — not speaking and hardly conscious of movement, so worn and frightened are they. Just clasping hands and holding closely to each other they come home.

There, sitting on the low bench by the door, Father Anton finds them a little later. In his own soft tongue the child tells him what has happened, the old priest's face growing very white and pinched, as he listens, for he loves the child almost as his own father does. Father Anton with his arm around the child questions him carefully, and they talk together a long time. But the girl understands little of what is said, for a weary numbness still rests upon her.

Finally the priest bids her go in and bathe her face in cool water while he goes to find the Senora Moreno to have tea served at once for them all. He will himself attend to Manuel, and then

they will be ready. Stupidly the girl obeys, and the cool water and forced activity arouse her to normal thought and feeling.

During the quiet little meal Father Anton talks cheerily of many things. Manuel is excitedly restless, and at times complains rather fretfully of the pain of an ant's sting on his arm, which he rubs frequently. The girl wonders to see the Father listen so carefully, and so soothingly caress the little lad. Dear little Manuel, how they all love him.

When again they are sitting out in the fresh cool dimness of the desert evening Manuel gayly tells her that Father Anton is going to give him a vacation from lessons for a whole week, and that he may stay all the time with her — to take care of her. Never — never again will he 'fight the spiders,' he shyly adds ; so the good Father will forgive him this time, and let him have this great pleasure. Smiling sadly the priest tells her that he has already arranged with the Senora Moreno, and the cot for the child has been placed near hers on the sleeping roof.

After the child has gone happily to bed, still complaining somewhat of the pain from the ant's sting, a little feverish too, the Senora Moreno and the Father come back to her. The priest's face is very white and drawn. He tells her quietly, though very frankly and tenderly, that they have sad news for her ; but she must be brave and meet it as they have already met it.

" Senorita, Manuel tells me that he realized that the Ah-ki-e was going to attack you and catching up a piece of board lying near him he thrust it between your low-bending face and the spider — just as it jumped. He assures me that he was careful not to strike the spider — he simply held the board to protect you, and the spider hitting it dropped at a safe distance and crawled quickly into its hole ; so then you were both safe. He is perfectly sure that the spider could not have touched him at any time — and so I shall let him think. But when I bathed him before tea I examined the " ant sting " (as he calls it) on the right arm — a little back and near the elbow where the arm is protected by the sleeve of his waist. I knew what I should find, Senorita, and I found it.

" A little blue puncture is there."

When they have helped the girl to control her grief and horror somewhat, the priest forces her to be quiet and listen to him.

"Daughter, you have no reason to reproach yourself for not stopping the insect fight, you could have done nothing with Manuel then. I, myself, have tried — and failed. I have been able to prevent his starting these battles, but after they begin — No, it is too late then.

"Little Manuel, Senorita, has a strange nature. Rarely intelligent and gifted, for a child of these simple people, he takes from the trace of Indian blood in the mother's race peculiarities hard to understand and impossible to eradicate. One of the wildest, weirdest, of the old legends has to do with an ancient chief. I'll spare you the legend and give the merest outline. This chief, to save the young wife he madly loves from the vengeance of the grey spiders, bargains with the great spirit protecting his tribe — that for her life the Ah-ki-e shall, for all time, take one life from each generation of his race to follow him on this earth. This is what the Indians call 'the spider's toll.' A trace of this ancient chief's blood was the mother's heritage. Of this race Manuel is the last; six months ago his two cousins were killed while working in a mine in Mexico. They were the sons of his mother's only brother. The news of this reached me from the child's father two days ago. With the old tale in mind the father asks for advice.

"Do I believe the old legend, Senorita? I do not know — I do not know!

"God's divine purpose must be in all mystery — for 'not a sparrow falleth without His knowledge.' But, daughter — I can only say that the careful records of the mother's family since our mission was established here do not seem to prove false the old tale. They seem to show that from each generation the grey spider has claimed its toll. But Manuel does not know this old tale, nor of the death of his cousins. Our own selfish grief must be hidden, and we must make these few days very happy ones. He does not suspect the blue puncture; and so it must be to the end. Only time can tell what the result will be."

Already the old priest has sent the Senora Moreno's Jose for an Indian runner who will leave before midnight with a message for the child's father. The two will return in about three days by horse, as it is so much quicker that way than the long journey far to the west by railroad. When the child's father comes the priest

will consent to anything he wishes — until then they must wait — wait.

Morning finds Manuel still a little feverish and without appetite, but free from pain. By the next day he is a picture of perfect health and joy. His father comes — a quiet, slender, competent-looking man, who speaks English with only the occasional use of a word from his own language and never one of the odd Indian words so constantly used by Manuel.

His grief is very pitiful. The boy has been his idol almost, always seeming a sacred charge and the link binding him to the tender little wife he loves still so devotedly, so unchangingly. To Manuel the father's presence makes all possible happiness complete, there can be nothing more to wish for. That every possible precaution may be taken to protect the child's life — if indeed it may be really in danger, he approves instantly the girl's frantic wish to bring a doctor from the large town down the railroad ; so at once a messenger is sent for one.

But in the large town no doctor can be found willing to leave, two doctors being absent already on calls from the mountains. However, one is found at last, a man noted in the great eastern cities for his exceptional skill. He is there to recuperate from overwork, and, hearing the story from a local doctor, he is amused, and somewhat curious to see this " case," which he knows can be only imagination, or an attack of the low Mexican fever so dreaded by the simple people along the desert, yet so easily banished by competent modern care and treatment. Finding he can make the trip by horse easily, he offers to go to the child. Taking everything necessary for the case he rides back with the messenger. Several minor accidents occur — a horse goes lame — and they are much longer on the way than they expected to be.

The first spasm has already passed before they reach the child. Skillfully this experienced, confident doctor examines little Manuel, looks curiously at the blue puncture, now fast disappearing, listens tolerantly to their account of the illness and the events leading up to it ; and passes it all by with an amused smile.

" The child simply has the fever so common all through Mexico and along this border. You need not be frightened, I can bring him through. In fact there is not the slightest reason why you

should be anxious. If you can lodge me conveniently, I will be glad to remain a few days ; and by that time the boy will be all right. I can assure you there is nothing to worry about."

Even the priest and grief-worn father feel strong hope at these confident, kindly words ; and appreciation and encouragement shows in every face.

The days pass, and into the keen eyes of the experienced, skillful man comes a puzzled, annoyed expression. The case does not yield as it should to the treatment it is receiving. He has been through this country before, over the line in Mexico, and has made a special study of these fevers. He knows what he has to deal with. But certainly this is different — this case. Why should such pain and peculiar condition attack the heart ? The case is, out of all reason, a stubborn one !

Another two days and the Senorita, when forced, almost fainting, by Father Anton from the torture of the darkened room where Manuel lies, finds in the garden a white faced man who looks at her strangely with eyes that show fear, and who speaks in a voice sharp and harsh with feeling.

" I have seen many die, but no death like this, Senorita. I have never faltered before, but this makes a coward of me. It's that cursed Mexican fever, of that I am sure. Oh, I know it's that — but such a death — *such* a death ! "

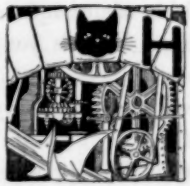
Later in the night, when they stand, helpless, by the child's bed — she hears the same white lips mutter — " I wish I knew ! *How* I wish I knew ! "

When morning dawns it is all over and little Manuel is at rest.

For the last time the grey spider has taken its toll from the old chief's race.

A Lesson in Cooperation.*

BY CLIFFORD HOWARD.



HE walked in briskly, asked me how I was, shook my hand, said he was Mr. Sprinkle, — Hi Sprinkle, — drew up a chair, put his hat on my desk, and told me I had been recommended to him as a gentleman who would undoubtedly be interested in an important little enterprise he had under way.

I wanted to tell him I was extremely busy and would prefer to have him postpone the interview to another day ; but he drowned the first part of my remarks in an uproarious blowing of his nose and scattered the rest of them by looking at me out of his handkerchief and saying: "You will pardon me, Brother, but you certainly have an uncommonly large nose ; and I'm glad to see it, sir ; I'm glad to see it."

He beamed upon me with the utmost good nature, and before I could answer back he slapped me affectionately on the knee and added in a confidential whisper, "It's a sign you've got a mathematical mind, a mechanical mind — exactly the sort of a man I am looking for ; and I got a proposition to make to you : What do you know about shampooing ?"

"Not the first thing !" I retorted.

"That's all right, brother," he responded soothingly ; "no harm meant. You're not as bald as I am. You'd as soon think of running a lawn mower over the Sahara as giving me a shampoo. And to tell the plain truth, I'm not much of a believer in shampooing, anyhow. You don't find the savages smearing their scalps with soap and eggs, and I'd like anybody to show me a bald-headed Hottentot or Cherokee Indian. But all the same, there are several million men in this land of Hail Columbia who believe they've got to have their noddles shampooed once in so often. You

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never pass a barber shop that you don't see some specimen of civilization sitting up in a chair with a head on him like a corn-starch pudding. Now, what I maintain is this : If a man wants to be shampooed, let him be shampooed. It keeps the barbers busy and keeps money in circulation. But have you ever stopped to figure out how much time is wasted in shampooing a man's head ? You haven't, eh ? Well, I'm going to tell you something about it in a minute; but, first of all, Brother, let me ask you: What's your income at the present speaking ? "

" You will pardon me," said I ; " but I can't see that that's any of your business."

" Just as you feel about it, Brother," acquiesced Mr. Sprinkle. " You know your own feelings best. I only wanted a figure for comparison, so I could show you by the multiplication table how much more you are going to make out of this shampooing business."

" But I tell you I don't know the first thing about it, and, what's more to the point, Mr. Sprinkle, I don't want to know anything about it. I'm a mechanical engineer ; not a barber."

" Very true, sir," responded my visitor; " but that's no reason you shouldn't share with me in the control of the barber-shop business of this country. A man doesn't have to be a clown to own a circus. And, as I was going to tell you, I have figured out that it takes a full half hour at the lowest estimate to shampoo a man and put him in condition to go out on the street. Let's say there're a hundred thousand men shampooed in the United States every day. That's 'way below actual figures, but we'll take that just to get an idea of the time consumed. A hundred thousand men at half an hour each is fifty thousand hours. Fifty thousand hours is twenty-one hundred days, in round numbers; and twenty-one hundred days is five years and nine months. That shows you the time that's being consumed in the United States cleaning men's heads — nearly six years every day. And do you know why? Because the tonsorial artist is the only workman on the face of the civilized earth who continues to do business in the same primitive style as his Egyptian ancestors — all by hand. No earthly reason for it, except that it has never occurred to anybody to modernize the barber shop with labor-saving machinery;

that is, it never occurred to anybody until yours sincerely, Hi Sprinkle, happened to be passing. You begin now to catch the drift of my remarks? Well, sir, to come to the point at once, picture to yourself a neat and inexpensive device, by which, with the mere turning of an electric switch — or by foot power, if you please, — a man may be thoroughly and comfortably shampooed in the space of three minutes. Yes, sir ; lathered, egged, rubbed, squirted, dried, perfumed, *and brushed and combed,* without ever a hand touching his head ! Sounds remarkable at first hearing ; but it's no more remarkable than feeding a chunk of wood to a machine and having it come out a box of matches before you can spit. If it did nothing more than save time, every barber shop in the land would have to have one, for no man is going to patronize a shop where it takes thirty minutes as against three to have his hair washed and brushed ; but it's bound, also, to reduce the cost of shampooing, for it's a labor-saving device, as well as a time-saver ; and a drop in the price of shampoos means more shampoos, and more shampoos means more business, and more business means more money — more money for the barbers and more money for you and me. Now how does it strike you, Brother ? "

" All of a heap," said I; " and what's your purpose in coming to me? what's your proposition ? " I inquired, stirred to sudden interest in the possibilities suggested by this animated Sprinkle.

Mr. Sprinkle grabbed me by the knee with his left hand and wiggled the first finger of his right hand within a foot of my nose. " Cooperation, Brother," said he ; " cooperation. Nothing nowadays can be accomplished without a joining of forces. I contribute one part of the enterprise; you, the other; and it's share and share alike in the profits."

" I see," said I : " You want me to exploit the patent ; look after the business end of it ; raise the cash for manufacturing it and getting it on to the market. Well, I don't know but what I should be able to make some such arrangement as that, if this remarkable machine you mention can actually do the work you claim for it and it isn't too complicated or too expensive. If what you say about it can be practically demonstrated, it would

certainly seem as though there ought to be a mint of money in it for the patentees."

"Not the slightest doubt about it, Brother. If I can induce you to take hold of it with me and you will do your part as I have done mine, we'll revolutionize the tonsorial business of the civilized world, and incidentally move up several notches toward the millionaire class."

"Have you done any figuring on the cost of making these machines?"

"Yes, sir, in a rough sort of way. Oughtn't to cost more than three dollars, I should say, at the outside, after we get the necessary machinery for making the parts. We could sell 'em for ten dollars apiece, easy; a gross profit of over two hundred per cent.; or, we needn't sell 'em at all — just rent them. According to the last census there were some hundred and fifty thousand barbers and hairdressers in the United States. Suppose we rented shampooers to only half of them — say seventy-five thousand machines. Two and a half or even four dollars a month would be dirt cheap, considering the returns the barbers will get from them, but suppose we estimate on only a dollar; there's a gross monthly income of seventy-five thousand dollars, or nine hundred thousand a year. Now, estimating the cost of producing these machines at three dollars, we have a total cost of two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, leaving us a clear gross profit over cost of manufacture of six hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. And that's just for the first year. There's no reason why these machines shouldn't last an indefinite time, for it's one of my hobbies to insist upon durability combined with simplicity; so that after the first year every penny of the nine hundred thousand dollars, outside of office and collection expenses, would be pure gravy. How does it strike you, Brother?"

"To be candid," said I, "your estimates strike me as a trifle loose and extravagant; but, allowing a liberal discount for enthusiasm and miscalculations and unexpected difficulties, it does look as though there ought to be money in it, I'll admit. But of course you will understand, Mr. Sprinkle, I can't be expected to pass judgment upon the matter until I have seen the machine in operation and have had an opportunity to study the situation in all

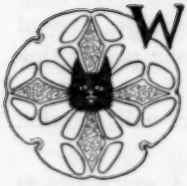
its details. Just at this time I happen to be extremely busy, but suppose you bring your machine around here to my office, say, at half past seven to-morrow evening, and let me look it over and go into the matter more fully with you then. I simply haven't a moment to spare this morning. I have already overstayed my time for a most important engagement. You will, therefore, really have to excuse me ; but at the same time, Mr. Sprinkle, I want you to know that I am genuinely interested in your proposition and that from the little you have told me I don't see why we shouldn't make a go of it if this invention of yours will do what you claim for it."

Mr. Sprinkle grabbed me by the knee again as I was about to rise. "Just a moment, Brother," he persuaded. "I don't want you to misunderstand my position in this matter. As I said to you a moment or two ago, this is an age of cooperation. Before there can be capital, there must be business ; before there can be business there must be science and invention, and before there can be invention there must be ideas. The man of ideas stands at the foundation of society. There can be no invention without a preceding idea. Some men have ideas and some have inventive ability. Now, I belong to the former class and you to the latter. So I come to you and say, Brother, let us combine our forces : I supply the idea of a shampooing machine, and you supply the invention. I think it, and you invent it. I need you ; you need me. Together we produce — "

He was still talking as I left the office and slammed the door behind me.

Murphy's Golconda.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.



WARDER MURPHY grounded his rifle and looked dreamily across the ten-acre patch of vegetable garden that surrounded Darlinghurst Penitentiary. A dozen "trusties," short sentence prisoners with full good conduct marks, were working in a line that stretched across the potato field, and Warder Murphy formed the extreme left wing. On the right was Warder Finnerty, and between these two living obstacles in the path to freedom, the squad of convicts toiled industriously.

Warder Murphy was not in an amiable mood. The little pangs of ambition gnawed within him, and he was dissatisfied with his position and prospects. For the first time in his life he believed himself capable of greater things, and as he stood gazing across the field, imagination swept the dozen prisoners from his perspective, and painted alluring pictures of Patrick Murphy's success in walks of life that were widely removed from the path he was following.

But suddenly the dream pictures fled. Murphy's conscious mind became aware of the fact that No. 307, known to his prison companions as "The Rat," had moved a few paces to the left towards a little stream that trickled over a gravel bed, and was then busy with an empty tomato can washing a few handfuls of the sandy soil. The warder was astonished. He moved rapidly towards the prisoner and angrily ordered him back to his work.

"The Rat" turned a weak cunning face up to his guard and made a motion for silence.

"There's gold here, Mr. Murphy," he whined. "Gold, real gold, sure!"

The warder's eyes blinked suspiciously, but he choked back the threat that was on his lips. The prisoner twirled the can

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vigorously, while his eyes and tongue pleaded with the officer.

"Let me just wash this tinful," he whispered, hoarsely. "I know there's gold here, Mr. Murphy ; I've been a miner and I know the looks of the ground."

Murphy's mood was favorable to the investigation of gold mines. His position did not appeal to him that morning, and he watched the prisoner anxiously.

With a final twirl "The Rat" jerked out the last of the muddy water that the tin contained, then he peered at the silt in the bottom.

"Look!" he cried, "didn't I tell you there is gold here?"

Murphy grasped the tin with trembling fingers. Gold ! and only a few minutes before, Fortune had been tantalizing him with visions that appeared to have not the remotest chance of becoming realities. But gold was there ! In the bottom of the can were three little yellow pellets that glistened in the wet sand. Murphy emptied them into the palm of his big right hand and eyed them greedily.

"It's gold," he gurgled.

"Sure thing," affirmed the prisoner.

The warder gloated over the find, and "The Rat" watched him closely.

Presently Murphy looked at his watch.

"We'll be going in to dinner directly," he said, excitedly. "What about this?" He nodded at the three pellets in his hand.

The prisoner considered a moment.

"Gold is no good to me," he muttered, sadly. "I can't get out to spend it, but I'll tell you something that I can use. What do you say if I'm willing to take a plug of tobacco instead of the yellow stuff, and then I'll keep mum about the find?"

Murphy was foraging in his pockets before "The Rat" had finished his proposition, and he hastily slipped an untouched plug to the prisoner who eagerly closed his hand over it and looked inquiringly at the face of the guard.

"'Tain't much for three lumps of gold," he mumbled.

"I'll get another plug off Warder Finnerty and give it to you," stammered Murphy. "But hold your tongue about the gold whatever you do."

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"I'll get another plug off Warder Finnerty and give it to you," stammered Murphy. "But hold your tongue about the gold whatever you do."

The second plug, which Murphy immediately obtained from Finnerty, reconciled "The Rat" and he wore a smile upon his white cunning face as he marched in with his eleven companions when the jail bell rang for dinner.

But Warder Murphy had no appetite. Visions of gold in unweighable quantities came up before his mental eye and flung commonplace matters into the background. The potato patch was a Golconda, and no one knew of it but himself and a prisoner whose silence he had bought with two plugs of tobacco. He smiled joyfully at the recollection of the deal that he had successfully made with "The Rat." But now the knowledge had to be put to good use. It would be necessary to purchase the vegetable garden from the state and then mine the ground for the wealth it contained. Murphy had no money, and he rapidly ran over in his mind those of his friends who had capital to invest. Weisler, the German Jew, who owned a watch repairing establishment near the penitentiary, had money, and ten minutes after the prisoners had been locked in their cells for their midday meal, Murphy was in the shop.

"Hey, Weisler," he cried, joyfully, as he laid the three little pellets upon the counter, "what would you give for a patch of ground where you could dig those up by the bucketful?"

The Jew picked up the pellets one by one, and after examining them keenly laid them back on the counter.

"I would give noddings, Mr. Murphy," he said, slowly, "dose are tree little lumps of brass."

. . . . . .

When Warder Murphy returned to the jail, the Chief Warder called him aside.

"There's trouble brewing for you," he said, grimly. "We searched 307 and his pal 59 at dinner-time, and found that each had a plug of tobacco in his possession."

"Number 59?" queried the astounded Murphy.

"Yes, number 59," snapped the Chief, "that friend of 'The Rat' who works in the brass shop."

And then it dawned upon the fearstricken warder how Number 307 had obtained the necessary material to salt the mine in the potato patch.

Servabo Fidem — I Will Keep Faith.*

BY ELIZABETH EWING.

I SLIPPED through the little revolving gate at the back of one of the city's old cemeteries. In the front, the graves were plentiful enough, God knows. There the grass was short and trim ; the dead lay in decorous mounds and flower-fragrant peace under their marble and granite headstones.

But the progress of the great city had closed the cemetery to all but plot-owners, before the graves reached the high, pine-sheltered fence that marked its western boundary. A low green hill shut them off, as it were, and between it and the line of pines was a wide grassy space unbroken by paths or the spade of the grave-digger.

Here, under the low-gnarled oaks, the grass grew long and thick and the sunlight lingered late on summer afternoons.

I laid my cushion against the trunk of one of the low thorny-looking oaks, and leaned restfully against it. It was so sheltered, so peaceful — and just outside that high pine-bordered fence the car-bells were clanging, the city's life was throbbing, hot, insistent, tired.

Yet none but I, forsooth, seemed to care for the green, the exquisite sense of rest that came with the low murmur of trees, the sunlight on the grass, the short, sweet rapture of the meadow-lark — all because the dead lay at rest yonder beyond the knoll.

I looked lazily about me. The care-taker's old-fashioned lodge stood only a stone's throw away in a little green hollow on the other side of the main path. At a short distance to my left, across a sunlit space of waving grass, a low live oak threw its knotty branches over a sunken grave, almost completely hiding it from view. As my eyes became accustomed to the flickering

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shadows beyond the strong sunlight, I saw a low stone coping and sunken headstone, both half covered by the coarse creeping vines that spread their glossy tendrils over the grave itself. It was in no wise different from many another old and neglected grave to be found in any burial place, but it was the only one to be seen from my little hollow and I fell to thinking.

What about this grave so far from its fellows ?

Whoever lay there must have been buried years ago ; the weatherworn and sunken stone and matted vines bore mute evidence to that fact. There was a name on the stone, deep-cut and still legible. I leaned forward to decipher it.

Slowly I read through the flickering shadows — Paul Clifford, aged 28 — that was all ! No date, no birthplace — I leaned back and gazed wistfully ; my book lay unheeded on my lap.

Paul Clifford, aged 28 !

Had he lived so long and merited so little ? Were there none left to be blind to his faults and add to his memory a tender word of regret or hope of immortality ?

A meadow-lark sang his short, joyous refrain over my head. I could not see him — one never can. His wild, free notes, so distinctly *alive,* seem to come from *nowhere.* He was alive — I, too, was alive — over in the lodge-keeper's garden I could hear some one chopping wood.

Paul Clifford, — aged 28 — was the only dead among the living. He was out of his place — he belonged among the others over the low grassy hill. Why was he lying out here, so far from his kind — a pioneer among the dead ?

Some graves mutely tell their story ; this one was eloquent in its silence.

Suddenly the wood-chopping ceased, and a moment later the old man came hobbling along the path, his rake over his shoulder. His leathery face was tanned almost to the color of the soil he worked in and he glanced at me with shrewd and kindly blue eyes as he passed. Meeting his look, I felt impelled to speak.

" Can you tell me," I asked, " why this grave " — nodding in its direction — " lies on this side of the hill — so far from the others ? I've been sitting here wondering — for want of something better to do," I added, half-apologetically.

The old man's weather-beaten face relaxed and he walked slowly over the grass toward me.

"No one belongin' to you, I suppose," he said, carefully shifting his quid of tobacco to the other cheek. I shook my head.

"He was berried afore I cum here," he said slowly. "I only live here five 'ear. I heerd say he wor an Englishman."

He leaned on his rake and peered through the warm sunlight over toward the grave.

"It *is* kinder curi'us," he resumed. "My orders is to do nothin' 'cept to clip them vines and keep 'em from growin' too thick and hidin' the name on the stone. They're partic'lar about that. They say there's a lady somewheres in th' old country sends money every five 'ear to have it done — twict as much as it would cost to plant flowers and make it look purty, but she won't have nothin' more done to it."

"Well," he wound up, philosophically, again shifting his quid and shouldering his rake, "If folks is willin' to pay for work they don't want done, it's none o' my business. I got plenty to do outside o' that," and touching his rough cap, he hobbled off.

Soon he was back at his old occupation, and again the steady strokes of wood-chopping rang rythmically through the air.

My meadow-lark at intervals trilled forth his short sweet notes. The warm sunlight fell about me; shadows like soft gray ghosts wavered and fell about the quiet grave and again I fell to dreaming.

So Paul Clifford, though long dead, had still one who loved him well — a wife, perhaps, more likely an old mother.

Death — to whom the life-weary hold out longing, unavailing arms — had surely come to him too soon. Had he gone willingly with the cold Presence, or had the ties of earth curled softly round his heart and drawn him back?

I must have spoken aloud, for a low voice at my side answered me. Strangely enough, I was not startled ; it was as though I had been expecting it.

A man stood beside me. He was young, and his fair hair swept back from a forehead as white as a girl's. His blue eyes, large and soft, were bent upon me.

"You are interested in yonder grave," he said, gently.

"Yes," I answered, "though I never saw it till a few minutes ago — "

He was looking at me intently.

"I have waited through the heat of many a summer and the cold and rain of winter," he said, with low and thrilling emphasis, "and never till now have I found one who looked upon that poor grave with tender regard — save one — and she has not seen it with her mortal eyes — "

I was not greatly surprised at his words or tone, nor did the impropriety of entering into conversation with a stranger in such a place occur to me. It seemed quite natural — like something very real that had happened long ago, and was now dimly reacting itself, without any volition on my part.

"Did you know him," I asked, nodding toward the grave.

"Yes," said the stranger.

"Then why was he buried so far from the others? I have been trying to puzzle that out," I said, dreamily — "and why has he only the bare name and age on his memorial stone? They who put that coping round his grave might well have added his birthplace or the date of his death — It seems strange!" — I spoke aggressively.

The man's clear blue eyes seemed to look through and beyond me.

"Life is strange," he said, gently. "Death is not more so. He whose poor body lies there was a stranger and far from home. None knew his birthplace. That he lies so far from the others was his last request, that she whom he loved might one day rest by his side — "

Two white butterflies — the souls of the dead — fluttered past me on delicate fragile wings — surely the most ethereal of all God's winged creatures, they — I watched their wavy undulations in the blue ether till they darted out of sight over the grassy hill, beyond which the dead lay thickly in their straight and narrow beds.

"You knew him well?" I asked again.

"Yes," he answered. "Would you like to hear his story?"

"Please," I said gently.

Truly, as he said, life is strange. I, who ordinarily take no

interest in strangers, sat and listened to a living stranger tell me the story of one long dead, and it seemed but natural that I should wish to hear.

"You may sit down yonder," I said, pointing to the grassy slope opposite. As he sat in the sunlight, his hair looked so fair as to be almost white, and I suddenly wondered that I could have taken him for a young man, so pallid and worn his face appeared. Only his eyes, intensely blue, filled with the unquenchable light of youth, gave the lie to the lines of age and experience in his finely cut face.

I was puzzled.

"One's birthplace matters little," he began. "It is one's life that counts. His of whom we speak commenced over the water — in the green lanes of Dover. His life had nothing remarkable in it, yet, lacking material achievement or visible success, there was one thing he did and did right well — he loved — "

The stranger's face grew introspective ; his blue eyes were luminous with some sweet and living memory. He had apparently forgotten my existence.

"Perhaps," he continued musingly, "he had not gone far enough along life's road to feel the call of wealth or power or place. He was young, and youth and love are natural mates — "

"And she " — I asked, half-timidly.

"She, too, loved and was faithful." There was a note of hushed and triumphant rapture in his voice as he answered. "They parted that he might make a home for her. Six months later he died on a foreign soil and strangers buried him, here, in this spot. Ere he left her, a solemn pledge was given. Should death overtake either, while parted in the body, the spirit of the dying would seek that of the other."

As in a dream I saw the trysting place under the old pink hawthorn tree — saw through the rifts in a dark and moonless sky, a man's tall form — a girl's pale, uplifted face and golden head — heard the solemn vows exchanged.

"And he?" I questioned again, softly.

"Paul Clifford kept his pledge — His spirit sought his love and told her what she later heard from mortal lips — Now her spirit calls to his — The waiting has been long, but the end is not far

off. I — Paul Clifford — feel her presence near me, more benign, more beautiful than in the days of her golden-haired youth — Farewell, my little friend! I thank you for the tender thought you sent toward the earthly resting-place of one who will sleep better when she whom he loves lies by his side."

A moment more and he was gone. I started in bewilderment and stared around me. My limbs felt numb; my book had fallen on the grass.

Had I been asleep and dreamed it? — or had my waking spirit left my body for a little space to commune with the spirit of Paul Clifford? I do not know, but as my senses slowly returned to earth, I looked half-fearfully about me.

My meadow-lark was silent; the wood-chopper, too, had gone. There was a chill in the air and the westering sun threw the gnarled, old trees in gigantic and fantastic reproduction upon the grass. With hands clasped about my knees, I contemplated the quiet grave long and earnestly. All was as it had been before my spirit went away, save that it lay deeper in shadow, stiller in the silence than before. Then, with a little sigh, I rose to go.

. . . . . .

Next morning the old caretaker found a woman lying on the grave. She was dead, and on her breast was a plain gold locket of English workmanship, inscribed "From Paul to Marguerite." Inside was the photograph of a young man, fair-haired and tall — he whom I had seen.

The woman was not young, but on her face of noble beauty lay a look of unutterable joy, and her thick, fair hair shone like gold in the sunlight.

Then I knew that she had found what she sought, and I knew, too, that never again would the restless, waiting spirit of Paul Clifford haunt the earth, but that of him I could henceforth truly say,

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well."

The Blond Beast.*

BY ROBERT SLOSS.

HER first impression of him was "the blond beast" couchant. He was squatting in a low chair swung part way around from his desk, on which sprawled his bare forearms. One foot was planted firmly on the kit of the bootblack sweating over his work. He was holding some document, which he leaned forward to examine intently through the haze of smoke from the black pipe gripped firmly, almost savagely, between his teeth.

"Sit down," he said, without moving, as she stepped across the threshold of the little office.

She stood surveying him, indignation, which she knew must be suppressed, rising in her. Then he looked straight into her face for a moment, out of two very tired eyes.

"*Won't* you sit down?" he asked, removing the pipe. But the emphasis gave the only hint of the question's whimsicality.

"Mr. Janvier," she said, seating herself gingerly just beyond the bootblack's extended feet, "I want to do your fashion page."

"Why?" he asked, swinging around and planting his other foot for the bootblack.

"Well, because I think I can make something of the department. I am sure I can make it better than it is now," she said, growing a little nervous under the steady, expressionless gaze of his eyes.

"What do you know about fashions?" asked Janvier indifferently.

"Well, I did the *Sun's* page for over a year, and I have a very wide acquaintance among the wholesale houses, which enables me to study the Paris papers intelligently with reference to what is likely to go here. Your last number is full of errors on that very

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point. It is not badly written, but it's inaccurate. Of course, I don't wish to displace any one, but I thought you must be contemplating a change and that you would consider me if you were. If you can spare a few moments, I think I can convince you that I know enough to do much better than is being done for you now."

"Very likely," said Janvier, the faint suggestion of a smile in his eyes; "I wrote that last page myself, and I know absolutely nothing about fashions."

She gasped and colored charmingly.

"Very well, Miss Drew," continued Janvier, referring to her card, "go to work. Have copy in here by Monday." And as his shine was finished, he swung to his desk, blew a cloud of smoke into it, and resumed the perusal of the document.

Miss Drew rose. "Thank you," she said. She took a hesitating step or two toward the door, surveyed the expansive back of his shirt a moment uncertainly, and then, with a toss of her head, walked firmly out. She did not slam the door, but she closed it decisively.

"Plucky little brat," muttered Janvier to himself in answer to the sound.

For weeks Miss Drew met Janvier on terms of the most punctilious formality, which at first he regarded with lazy cynicism, then with amused curiosity, and finally with secret wonderment at its apparent sincerity. Not that his own manner gave any opening for more genial relations. But Janvier thought he knew women. He had found they made their own openings, if for no other reason, to convince weak man that he could not lightly ignore even the mere fact of femininity.

As for Miss Drew, she could not have been feminine at all if she had not indulged some curiosity as to his apparent immunity — not to herself, but to the sex. Seeing other women, even important visitors, subjected to his pipe and bootblack, had mollified the sense of personal indignity she had first carried away. He was at least consistent in his brutality. Besides, he had given her absolute liberty in her department, took her copy just as she wrote it, asked no questions, and would listen to no explanations. She set this down to indifference at first, but she had made good

her boast of improving the department and she knew that he valued her work correctly.

And then, she had caught glimpses of his eyes — sometimes a whimsical lighting up when he looked at her, sometimes a distant melancholy — that made her wonder if, after all, he were quite the "blond beast" she had thought him. But her predominant feeling was one of thankfulness that, whatever he was, he was so much less troublesome than most of the men with whom she had been obliged to parley in her struggle for independence.

Ohlsen had noticed her one day when she came in to lay some copy on Janvier's desk. The latter was sprawled in his chair gazing into vacancy, and it was one of the times Miss Drew observed the distant melancholy in his eyes. This friendly call during business hours recalled things Janvier would fain forget. Ohlsen had a married sister who might have been—— But Ohlsen was a metaphysician and not very observant objectively. It was odd of him to notice Miss Drew.

"What a splendid creature!" he said, when she had closed the door.

"Creature or creation?" drawled Janvier.

"Heaven had most to do with her making," said Ohlsen.

"Mother Nature and the modiste," mused Janvier cynically. "Though I suspect she is mostly self-made. She certainly knows how to exemplify her own theories of dress."

"Has she theories?" marveled the literal Ohlsen.

"She writes my fashion page," said Janvier, settling back to enjoy watching Ohlsen try to fit this bit of materialism into one of his dream fabrics.

"You don't tell me that that incarnation of Pallas Athene descends to the labyrinthine banalities of frocks and feathers?" asked Ohlsen wonderingly.

"They all do," said Janvier, yawning. "Though I'll do this one the credit to admit that she makes less fuss about it than any I've seen."

"Well, Jan, you've seen a good many," said Ohlsen. "I wish I had half your ability to turn into attractiveness the material that finds its way into my brain. Then you've got just the tinge of melancholy that makes one appealing to women."

"Thanks, my faithfully depreciative friend," laughed Janvier, musing on the rarity of use for one's real self.

But Janvier, unlike his friend Ohlsen, was keenly observant objectively. In his indifferent way, he got to piecing things together into mental pictures of Miss Drew, wondering lazily how near the truth they were, and then wiping them cynically off the slate. Which was a good deal for Janvier to be doing — and he might have been doing it yet, had not that old friend of dramatists — Fortuity — stepped in.

Fortuity waited till a scalding hot day of midsummer. And then one morning as Miss Drew laid her copy on Janvier's desk and he looked up with a smile, instantly startled into concern at her deadly pallor, she reeled, groping feebly — and before she had even lost her balance entirely, Janvier sprang up and sidewise sinuously, and gathered in her unconscious form as neatly as the man on first stops a long throw-in.

In another second she was supine on the floor, and he was pressing the desk buzzer with one hand while he reached for a big dictionary with the other. Raising her gently, he slid the book under her hips, and was back again with two more tomes for her knees and ankles.

Kneeling, he deftly removed her belt, tore apart the hooks and eyes of her skirt band, whipped out his pocket knife and cut at one slash all the cords and tapes he could gather from around her waist.

"Of course she wears 'em," he muttered; "I felt 'em when I caught her!" Whereupon he ripped the buttons off the back of her shirtwaist, tore apart the incomprehensible garment beneath, and cut her stay laces.

"Water — quick!" he said calmly to the boy who just then answered the buzzer.

Some moments later, when Miss Drew opened her eyes dazedly, she saw Janvier bending above her, bathing her temples with a wet handkerchief, while his other hand held one of her wrists. His eyes met hers with a smile of reassuring solicitude which held them sweetly for a second, then she strove vaguely to rise.

"Lie still; you're all right," said Janvier quietly. "Don't be alarmed. I'll see you home. Where do you live?"

She told him mechanically, and then wearily closed her eyes.

Later, when some of the women about the office had pinned her together, and she had been helped to the cab, and he had got in beside her, she tried to sit very straight. But when, saying, "Now, don't be silly; you know you can't wobble around this way," he had put his arm about her, she was glad to rest her dizzy head on his shoulder and close her eyes. A sense of security settled over her. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that her weakness should find his strong arm and shoulder.

But, with the return of normal circulation, her brain suddenly caught up the threads of her habitual mental attitude. She sat bolt upright.

"Oh, I mustn't be sick," she said nervously; "I can't afford to be sick."

"You can," said Janvier; "just as long as is necessary — which will be hardly any time at all."

Her startled eyes met his, which held them with an unwonted light of tenderness fitting with the gentle tone of his voice. She looked a moment — then it all blurred with tears. She felt his arm about her again, drawing her to him. His hand gently patted her head down on his shoulder and she felt his lips pressed gently against her cheek. It was too much. She yielded to it all like a tired child.

And when he had helped her upstairs, and was gone, and the landlady had helped her undress, she had not strength left for anything but to lie on her little hallroom bed with closed eyes, the sheer delicious sense of him completely possessing her.

Janvier, being objectively observant, had noted that her surroundings — the books, the manuscript in her own handwriting on the little table, evidently a play, the economical furnishings — disclosed a struggle that did not end with fashions. He was thoughtful all the next day, in the fitful, irritable manner of a man who reckons with an unwonted impulse not in accord with predetermined regimen, but who is loth to deny either.

The impulse at least was not denied, for it did not at all accord with Janvier's regimen to pay so much attention to any woman as he did to Miss Drew during the following week. He was assiduous in his solicitude.

And she — she yielded to it, too weak to reiterate an ineffectual protest against what only one's mental attitude resists. It was a slight touch of heat, the doctor said; not serious, but accentuated by a poorly nourished system, and imposing quiet and rest from mental excitement.

Certainly Janvier had proved the most soothing and adequate manager of a rest cure that heart could desire. She even confessed her ambitions to him at last; how she was trying to write a play, and how fashion pages had always been merely her visible occupation. That was on Sunday evening when he had taken her to dine and drive up the Boulevard. And when he bade her good-night at the door, he had taken her gently in his arms and kissed her divinely upon the lips. And she had bent to his embrace as pliantly as a rosebush to the steady west wind.

She had said that she was well enough, and would drop in at the office on Wednesday, and that meanwhile she would discharge him as nurse — and he had reluctantly agreed. He chafed like a child and cursed himself for it, till Wednesday morning brought her letter to his desk.

DEAR FRIEND:

For you have been such a true friend in need, that I wish my poor feminine resources permitted me to requite you better than by causing you annoyance and perhaps temporary inconvenience. You must not think me so dull as not to know you deserve better from me, but please forgive me for having neither the courage nor the strength to be just.

I must not see you again, and therefore I cannot take up my work at the office in any way that would be fair to you. I enclose the card of a young woman I think you will find quite competent to succeed me if you will try her in the emergency.

You are a man, and of course you will insist on a reason. And again I fear I must disappoint you. I know I can't make clear my reason to you — though I have one that to me is very clear and imperative.

But you have been so good and considerate of me, that I will try to show you something of what I feel.

It is because you have simply taken advantage of my weakness.

I don't mean intentionally! Don't think me so insensible to your kindness as to mistake your attitude as other than sincere.

When I first saw you, I thought you were

the embodiment of Nietzsche's "blond beast". I know you are not quite that, now.

But it *is* your nature to be irresistible. And since I find that in the "duel of sex" you so readily disarm me, there is nothing left for me but to employ the better part of my valor in running away from you.

I am trying to be as frank with you as woman can. You unconsciously override certain deep-seated prejudices and viewpoints of mine. You interfere seriously with my cherished independence, and rob me of my peace of mind, through fear that the outcome of an unequal struggle will be unhappy for both of us.

Besides, my ambition to achieve something is dearer to me than any ill-gotten comfort my femininity may temporarily trick me into accepting.

Oh, that sounds horribly selfish and ungrateful! You must not believe that I am not thankful for all you have done! But I am sure I am doing what is really best for both of us.

Try to think of me — if you ever do — as
Ever sincerely your friend,
ALICIA DREW.

"Oh, hell!" muttered Janvier, as he swept his hat from the top of his desk on to his head and strode vigorously from the office, putting on his coat as he went.

The next week, Ohlsen, entering in his unobtrusive way, found Janvier working savagely at his desk, and upon receiving a curt nod, folded his long form into a chair and quietly lit a pipe.

"I want you to dine with me at the East Side Settlement," he said at last.

"What for?" snapped Janvier.

"There are two extremely interesting girls there. One is a newcomer and a perfect beauty," continued Ohlsen with bland disingenuousness.

"Are you insinuating that you expect *me* to meet these females?"

"You, certainly — who else?" chirruped Ohlsen. "You have the cultivation, the charm, and then your inimitable way with women."

"Ohlsen, you're an ass!"

"Brother!" gurgled Ohlsen.

"No, I'm a 'blond beast,' I understand. The ass is gray, the color of memory. But I'd be obliged if you'd explain just what kind of ass you take me for," rejoined Janvier.

"An egregious one! You're not content with easy-going, every-day asininity, like the rest of the herd."

"I'm afraid I'm not," said Janvier bitterly.

"But why not permit yourself a soupçon of mediocrity, now and then? You will at least be touched with a feeling of our infirmities — and besides the girls are really charming," urged Ohlsen.

"Touched — exactly!" said Janvier cynically. Because you think I am such a pre-eminent variety of ass, you ask me to expose my susceptibilities to casualties so common as to be avoidable even by a goat. And you put it on the ground that I am to be touched! Why, forsooth? Has your complacent anserine philosophy the answer to that?"

"My profound empyricist," said Ohlsen, warming gaily, "you omit to observe that necessity for innumerable instances, which even the slightest generalization about femininity demands — and with which I thought you so familiar! In order to determine on a truly masterful folly, one must at least contemplate many minor ones."

"No, old man," said Janvier wearily, "I think I am gradually growing wiser. At least I'm going into training. I shall begin by adopting a little more of the attitude of the early church toward woman."

And not all Ohlsen's well-bred intellectual scoffing, pushed almost to the point of seriousness, could persuade him.

"I am permitted to do no more," said Ohlsen at last. "Your fate cries out and you won't listen. I have already dared too much in bearding such a beast."

Half-laughingly, half-regretfully, he took his departure and Janvier settled back into the somber mood of defeat where his strenuous but ineffectual search for a clue to Miss Drew's whereabouts had left him. She had disappeared from him completely.

So Janvier became what he told himself was the same automaton he had been before she came; while winter — the bleak, watery winter of New York — settled over the city. He ravened over his work; he browbeat his staff, and treated with scantier courtesy than ever women who gingerly invaded his sanctum. He told himself that if he were to be set down as a "blond beast," he

would keep strictly in character. Yet he recognized even this as a phase of a haunting mood that all too frequently made him feel how threadbare was the cloak of his old cynicism, even as he clutched it more closely about him.

Then he would walk.

It was an afternoon at the end of January, when he slammed down his desk early and strode uptown against the gusts of rain. A northeast wind was slapping against the drenched streets. Passers-by instinctively made way before his overbearing figure, with its long coat flapping about his swiftly-moving rain boots and his head held up into the teeth of the gale.

He felt magnificently alone. But, as his rapid gait brought him up the crowded thoroughfare to where even he was impeded, thinking of the deserted river front, he turned west sharply into a side street — and collided with the prow of an umbrella.

The woman behind it staggered back a step or two, the umbrella was whipped upward by the wind, and he looked straight into the eyes of Alicia Drew.

"Oh!" she cried, poising like a much-bedraggled faun at bay.

Janvier reached for her.

"Don't touch me!" she pleaded, starting back.

"Who's going to touch you?" he said sharply. "Give me that umbrella."

He took it and stepping beside her brought its head up into the wind.

"Now," he said, "where are you going?"

"I won't tell," she said.

"Well, you weren't going to walk there. Can't you let me take you to your car peaceably? We can't stand here, you know."

"Yes, of course — if you will," she said in sudden confusion at the ridiculousness of the situation. "Forgive me for being so silly; but you startled me."

Janvier waited in silence for her to gather her skirts, and then guided her by means of the umbrella back across the thoroughfare. There the rudely sportive wind so buffeted them that she instinctively took his arm, and when they emerged from the throng, under the awning to which he had led her, he closed the umbrella impatiently.

"What car?" he asked.

"It's a long block further east," she said apologetically.

He raised the umbrella and waited. When the skirts were again arranged, he offered his arm. She took it, then paused.

"Are you very much provoked with me?" she asked, looking up at him quizzically.

"No," he said curtly, and made as if to start.

"I'm only trying," he added, pausing, "to do exactly as you wish — as nearly as I can make that out. If you would let me be a gentleman instead of a 'blond beast,' I'd take you home in a cab."

"That's very subtle of you," she said, dropping his arm.

"Look here," he said tensely; "you know that's not fair — you know I never was more subtle with you than if I'd been a big schoolboy!"

"I believe that," she said impulsively, laying her hand on his arm. "Forgive me! I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Nor I you!" he said earnestly. "If I can't convince you of that, I'll not trouble you again. Give me an hour. Come! It's dinner time."

"I'd like to — but — I'm afraid ——" she began.

But Janvier was already handing her into a cab.

All the way to the little restaurant, he sat silent and aloof beside her. The determined set of his jaw filled her with misgiving that she would have been much wiser to have run away at the first sight of him. By the time they were seated and he had given a few decisive orders to the waiter, she had marshalled all her powers to resist him.

"Now," he began, "what are you afraid of?"

"Of you," she said; "you make me do what I don't want to."

"That's exactly what I thought you did to me at first," he said. "But I know better now — and so do you, in your heart. You do want to, or you wouldn't be so afraid.

"Listen!" he continued, as her lips formed in protest. "I took too much for granted, perhaps; but that, too, was boyish. You make me boyish — that's your effect on me, and you're wrong to set it down to anything else. I thought all the boyishness was wrung out of me, till you came along. You brought it all

back with a rush that frightened you — that's all. It frightened me, at first. I didn't want to get hurt any more; and every time I've been boyish, I've got hurt."

The old, far-away look of melancholy stole into his eyes. She leaned forward and looked at him a moment questioningly, then said softly:

"I've been hurt, too — by boyishness."

"But not this kind," he said with sudden passion. "Not a man's boyishness! A boyishness you yourself inspire — that bends a strong man into sympathy with your lightest mood! How could you be hurt by that? It guarantees your absolute rule in perpetuity."

She looked away from his devouring gaze, and caught her breath.

"You know you can't guarantee that," she said.

"Not I," he swept on, "but the nature of the thing itself. It is a divine pledge to both of us. You must see that I'm serious and that I think I love you. I've thought that about other women, and been ready to do all the thought implies to the right sort of man. But the passion never took care of itself, like this. It never bore me along in the deep flood of it, like this; so that I don't have to think what I'm doing, to be sure I'm right. Such feelings are basic, primal; they admit no argument — it's like a beast finding its mate."

"A blond beast?" she asked — so gently that he was transfixed by the self-accusing tenderness unmasked by her tone and swift, liquid glance of the eyes.

"But I'm not ready to be caught!" she cried, shrinking from the sudden masterful lighting up of his face.

"But you are caught!" he said tenderly "You're not ready to admit it, that's all. We're not children, and two people can't spontaneously be to each other the kind of thing we were, even for so brief a time, and forget it. I've learned that much while you've been hiding."

She was silent a long moment, then looked up quizzically.

"And if I come out of my lair, what will you do?" she asked.

"Any piece of the most utter foolishness you tell me!" he said solemnly as though it were a vow.

"Well, then, order me a cup of coffee," she said with a happy little laugh.

"Why, there's Ohlsen," he said, as he looked about the place for a waiter, "and he sees me and is coming over. The devil!"

"He's not the devil; he's very nice," she whispered. "I met him down at the Settlement, where I went to live so as to hide from you; and I made him promise not to tell."

Janvier gasped blankly.

"Come, now," greeted Ohlsen, "what are you doing here?"

"What does it look like to you?" growled Janvier.

"It looks to me," gurgled Ohlsen, "as if the 'blond beast' has found his mate."

Which shows that Ohlsen was not altogether unobservant objectively, for he had been watching them unaware for a quarter of an hour.

The Decision of Hip Toy.*

BY JOHN KENNETH TURNER.

HAD any one suggested to Miss Elsie Smith, teacher of Chinese Methodist Mission Number Three, corner Third and Post streets, that Hip Toy — rosy-faced, innocent-eyed, neat and cleanly, eighteen-year-old Hip Toy, *her* Hip Toy — might be a blood-letting highbinder, she would have indignantly replied that it was a slander and an outrage. Why, of all her thirty-one pupils enrolled not one prayed louder nor came more near to singing in tune than her Hip Toy !

And yet Hip Toy was a highbinder. The proof of the pudding was in the long-barreled revolver which he caressed beneath his blouse. Hip Toy had not yet taken the life of a fellow being, but he was going to take the life of Bing Chee. There could be no doubt of that. True, Hip Toy was a regular attendant and beloved pupil of Mission Number Three ; true, he prayed and sang as industriously as the best of them, but he considered these things merely as irksome exigencies of a situation in which he was learning, free of charge, to count American money, to speak English, to read, to write, to figure, learning a thing or two about Occidental character and Occidental business, learning many things that would enable him to meet and swindle the white devil at his own games and in his own country. Moreover, it was universally accepted as good policy for young highbinders to enroll themselves as pupils in Christian missions. It was known to serve as added protection in case of trouble with the police.

At this moment Hip Toy was sitting on a bench in a downtown park, one hand holding a lighted cigar, the other fumbling that long-barreled revolver under his blouse. Facing him, across the park and on the opposite side of the street, stood a row of ramshackle, one-story buildings. Above one, the lowest and most

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ramshackle of them all, Hip Toy spelled out the gold letters of a sign : " Bing Chee, General Merchandise."

No personal grudge did Hip Toy harbor against Bing Chee. Yet he waited eagerly, joyfully, for the time when darkness should fall and he would cross the street for the kill. He knew that precisely at seven o'clock every evening Bing Chee, leathery-faced and gray-headed Bing Chee — Bing Chee the miser, a man who had scraped together ten thousand American dollars in half a life-time and now refused point-blank to give one-tenth of it to the Suey Yup society of hatchetmen, would step out of his place of business, look cautiously around, lock his inside doors, swing to his heavy outside doors, lock them and, in dangling queue and slippered feet, patter two blocks west, turn into an alley, climb a flight of stairs and take supper with some cronies in an exclusive Chinese restaurant on the second floor.

That is, he would do these things if he were permitted to do them. But Hip Toy was there to see that he did not do them. Hip Toy's plans were made. It was early September and the sun would be down soon after six. At seven the lamps would begin to sputter in the deepening twilight. While Bing Chee was yet in his store, bending over his accounts, Hip Toy would sidle across the street and slip behind one of those heavy outside doors. When the old merchant swung the door away from the wall, the long barrel would press close against his body, there would be a muffled report, Bing Chee would fall, a young Chinaman would dash into a driveway close by, run around a stable, scale a fence, sprint the length of an alley, emerge on to a lighted street and walk leisurely to Low Foo's fan-tan joint, where the Suey Yups would be waiting in a back room for him and his report. Ah, it would be very easy ! Seldom do the meddlesome police succeed in laying their hands heavily upon one Chinaman who kills another — seldom indeed ! And then would not another example be made for those stubborn ones who refused to pay their tithes to the Suey Yups ?

" Thou shalt not kill." The words meant nothing to Hip Toy. But as he turned over in his mind the killing that he was to do, the sentence wormed its way to the surface of his consciousness. It was in the mission that he had heard it, in the mission only.

They thought he would be cowed by such a commandment ! "Thou shalt not kill." What did it amount to ? Merely a chip from the moral law of the white devil, whom all Chinese hate, no matter how friendly the smile on their lips ! "Thou shalt not kill !" Hip Toy bent back his head and laughed silently and deep. What fools they were !

As the sun dropped low a park squirrel, which had come from somewhere among the trees, crossed the vision of Hip Toy and he idly watched it. It was evidently on a foraging expedition and dodged this way and that over the grass, sniffing at every strange and familiar object as it passed along. The squirrel was large and gray, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. A passer-by threw it a peanut, upon which it fell with avidity, tearing the thin shell apart with its clicking teeth and devouring the kernel. Another was disposed of in the same manner, but the third the furry thing carried in its jaws to the base of the nearest tree, where it dug a hole with its forefeet, pushed the treasure into the hole with its tiny nose and then covered it over by scratching the dirt up with its claws.

A dripping faucet topped the end of a pipe which rose two and one-half feet from the ground not far away. Scaling the pipe, the squirrel poked its nose into the spout and by waiting patiently secured a full and refreshing drink. Every movement of the animal seemed a happy frolic. The little body fairly quivered with the tingle of life ; the wild, bright eyes brimmed over with the electricity of joyous existence.

Soon the squirrel strayed near the young Chinaman lounging on the bench. It approached and played about his feet, then ventured to climb a little way up one leg. It quickly scurried down again and out of reach, but, as he did not move, it returned and ran up to his knee. It crouched there for a moment, blinking its bright little eyes at him, then went on a search of his clothing for sweetmeats.

Hip Toy's face, set with the consciousness of his purpose, the time for the fulfilment of which was rapidly approaching, relaxed a bit and he half smiled. Then he pushed the little creature away resolutely, almost roughly, on to the ground. But it returned, cuddled down in his lap and refused to budge. This time he

could not resist the temptation to stroke the furry back. Though a highbinder, Hip Toy was still a human being.

Soon the little animal left him, and when it did so his eyes followed it. A small white dog saw the squirrel and gave chase. The bright-eyed frolicker ran up a tree, but only for a little way. It returned, scampered down the trunk and tempted the canine. The dog sprang for the squirrel and the latter, just out of reach, ran around and around the trunk. The dog followed, yelping with excitement, and the squirrel continued to tease him.

Sometimes the squirrel would drop to the ground on the opposite side of the trunk, but would be up again in time to avoid the rush of his pursuer. When the dog relaxed his vigilance for a moment the daring squirrel would leap from the tree and scamper for another one. He would be almost caught, but each time the distance was well calculated, and the pursuer would be a tantalizing yard behind. Safe in the new tree, the squirrel would turn about on the trunk, tail upward, and with audible squeaks, like unto laughter, would mock the enraged terrier.

Such antics continued until the dog lost hope and started to leave. Several times, as he turned away, the squirrel enticed him back by taking an extra long chance for a distant tree, but finally the dog made off at a gallop, and though his tormentor followed at his very heels to the sidewalk, he did not so much as look back.

But in following the small white cur the squirrel had not calculated on the possibility of encountering a new enemy. As the animal turned to retreat, another dog came rushing forward. The new dog was larger, faster, fiercer. With blazing eyes and bared fangs he leaped across the sidewalk and upon the grass. At sight of him the squirrel scuttled for the nearest tree. The tree was seventy-five feet away and there was no motion of confidence in the scamper now ; it was one of pure fright. The dog followed and, with a yelp of eagerness, he seemed to see that he would overtake the fugitive. Now he was fairly upon the little fellow. Straining forward, he snapped his jaws. But the squirrel was not there. In that instant the smaller animal had doubled suddenly and now he was behind the dog, which had rolled over on the grass in an attempt to turn as quickly as the squirrel.

But the dog was up again in a flash and now he was between the squirrel and the tree. The entire action of the little drama was so swift that there was no chance whatever of human interference. The death of the squirrel seemed inevitable. But stay, one hope for life remained and this the squirrel took. With a pitiful squeak he dashed straight at Hip Toy, then up a leg and into his arms as the young Chinaman rose to his feet. Slipping half under the blue blouse the furry creature hid there, its warm little body all a-tremble with terror.

"Get out!" Hip Toy gave the dog a vigorous kick which sent him yelping about his business. Then he cuddled the animal in his arms and stroked the trembling back again and again. Over him there flooded strange sensations. His hands were hot, his face flushed, and his body trembled quite as violently as did that of the wild little creature in his arms. As with soothing strokes of the hand he quieted the trembling of the frightened little life, the first he had ever saved, his own life suddenly became inexpressibly dear to him. Life in general came to hold for him a new meaning, a new value, a sacredness such as had not before appealed to his mind. His fumbling hand happened to touch the steel of the revolver beneath his coat, and he drew it away again as hastily as if it had been a writhing snake.

Darkness closed in about the Chinaman and the squirrel. Gently Hip Toy set the little animal down and turned away. Seven o'clock struck, Bing Chee came out of his place of business, locked his doors and pattered safely to the eating place of his brothers. In a back room of the fan-tan house of Low Foo a circle of lean-faced young Mongolians waited impatiently for their fellow highbinder, Hip Toy. But Hip Toy did not come. With head high and eyes alight with a new fire, Hip Toy was repeating over and over again the words: "Thou shalt not kill! Thou shalt not kill!" It was the first time that he had looked the commandment squarely in the face.

The Espy Curse.*

BY EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY.

THERE was a curse on the house of Espy. A strange and awful fatality had pursued the name for two hundred and fifty years; a fatality as certain as birth and death, as unswerving as the sun in its course. No male Espy ever lived to the age of forty-one. Near the close of their fortieth year (and few died in childhood, for they were a sturdy stock) their doom overtook them. The end of a male Espy was never from disease, and was never peaceful. They died by violence, one way or another. And they died suddenly. The women Espys lived and died as other people, though constantly saddened and perplexed by the presence of a scourge which could not be overcome.

The origin of the fearful legacy which had descended to them from a most remote sire was guarded as carefully by the luckless folk as was the honor of their house. No one not of the name ever knew *why* the fortieth year was the last to all men of the blood. It was an oath-guarded secret, to betray which was worse than death. But this is how the strain of doom began.

Away back in the days when Roundhead and Cavalier made of all England a battlefield, there lived in a low country shire a nobleman by the name of Sir Marmaduke Espy. His castle was old and strong, his rent roll was long and was kept clean, and his wealth was great. He followed valiantly in Cromwell's wake until peace was on the land again, then hied him back to his castle and cast about him for a wife. He was a stern and cruel man, albeit he had a trick with his gray eyes which betokened gentleness and humor. It was this trick which won for him the Lady Godiva, a slender, golden-haired girl, daughter to old Sir Gaspar Noel, whose lands touched Sir Marmaduke's to the south.

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It was told about the country that Lady Godiva was gifted with second sight, and could commune with spirits. Sir Marmaduke had heard the tale, but little did it bother him. They were wed with much pomp and ceremony, a feast was spread to which every retainer of the two houses was invited, and life for the married pair started most auspiciously.

After a few years it chanced that a cousin of the new wife came a-visiting from the court of France. He was a much dressed youth, who played the lute and sang *chansons*. His fingers were white and slender, his nails were pink and polished, and he wore fine lace at his wrists and throat. Sir Marmaduke despised him from the first, and it suited him poorly that the cousin and Lady Espy should be so much together. Day after day they strolled through the gardens of the castle, but more often Lady Espy's young son was with her, which lent an air of propriety to their companionship.

Then there came a day when a long-tongued serving wench sought Sir Marmaduke with a tale of broken faith. He did not know that she was one whom his wife had sent to the scullery from position as chamber attendant, because of misconduct, but his ignorance of this could in no way excuse his actions. It so happened a feast was to be held in the hall of the castle that very evening, and, exercising a rare cruelty, the nobleman waited until the guests were seated and his wife was by his side. Then suddenly, without warning, and without previous word to her, he rose up and denounced her as faithless before all who sat there, speaking very hard and bitter accusations. Then he ordered her from his roof, robed as she was in her festal garments. Bade her begone straightway, even as he stood. The cousin who had caused all the trouble arose from his seat to say somewhat in her behalf, whereat Sir Marmaduke drew bow and sent a shaft through his heart, so that he fell dead across the board and his blood flowed among the viands of the feast.

At first the Lady Godiva turned very white, and grasping the arms of her chair, stared up at her accuser with a stone-blank face. Then when the insult began to burn in her bosom, which had never cherished a disloyal thought, she got on her feet, and, stately and proud, walked the length of the hall. At the open

door she paused and turned, and while all the assembled people looked at her, and while her husband who had put her away looked at her, she looked at him, and spoke. At first it was a simple denial of the charge, in clear, cold words. Then her features and manner changed. Her eyes widened, and her form seemed wrenched by a sudden shock. Stretching out her arm, she pronounced a curse upon Sir Marmaduke, and upon his name forever. She foretold that he would die by violence before the dawn of his next birthday, and that the same fate should rest upon his sons after him forever. They might enjoy life until they reached his present age, but beyond that they should never go. Then she left the hall, found a horse, and rode alone to her father's roof.

Such was the origin of the curse, and for two hundred and fifty years it had not failed. Sir Marmaduke was past forty when he committed his awful sin. A few months later, while enjoying a hunt, he was thrown from his horse and was torn to pieces by a wild boar. And so it had gone on down the line. Espys were born, male and female, and Espys were wed, but no man had ever lived till he was forty-one. In divers and sundry ways their fate found them; some in battle, some at the hunt, some at merry-makings, some by assassins' hands, and a few by their own, when the grewsome knowledge became too heavy to endure. And this was the rule of the house. When a boy had grown to manhood and had passed on to his twenty-fifth year, his nearest relative acquainted him with the story here set down, and pointed him to his long line of ancestors to support the tale. Few there had been who had blanched at the fearsome news. In the main they were a devil-may-care, happy-go-lucky set, the Espy men, and many of them, when their day of doom was declared, plunged headlong into life, determined to wrest from the fifteen years left the fullest possible measure of happiness. There had been a few serious minded scions now and then who had thought an exemplary life might lift the ban. One had even studied for the ministry, and received orders; had preached for ten years, and was killed while passing a building under construction, by a dislodged piece of stone coping. They could not escape. The fatality which was a part of them came with the

ship which bore them to America. It followed them through the years, generation after generation, and in 1908 we find the Espy home nestled in the blue grass meadows and green hills of Kentucky.

The great white structure with its columned porticos breathed an air of repose and refinement. Horses and cattle and sheep browsed in the outlying pastures. Fields of grain and rich orchards bespoke a yearly bounty; a glorious independence of the city marts. Through the centre of the estate ran a clear, smooth stream, giving life alike to the fields and the beasts of the fields. Besides the servants, the Espy home consisted of three people. The mother — for there was no father now — sixty-five and gray; the daughter, Esther, a cultured, sweet-faced woman of thirty, and Marmaduke, the only son, aged forty. Not since the evil progenitor who had brought the curse upon them had a son of the house borne that name before. But the boy's father had insisted upon it, advancing no argument except that he liked the name, and besides, there was no escape. So our story properly begins with Mr. Marmaduke Espy, of Espy Hall, riding up to the door of his home with a letter which he had taken from the mail-box by the side of the road. He was a large man, a family characteristic, but not unshapely. He sat his horse squarely, his broad shoulders back, and his clean shaven face was very handsome, with a touch of sternness and a decided trace of melancholy. His eyes were gray and frank, with a beam of humor. Back of that was a faint shadow of unrest, but not of fear. He knew that his health was superb; that he was as fine a specimen of physical manhood as could be found within the borders of his state, but he could not forget that he was past forty; that he had, in fact, entered upon the last month of his fortieth year.

As he dismounted and hitched his horse before going in, he stopped for a moment and gazed about him. The June day was a miracle. A few fleecy clouds lay against the bright blue overhead; the grass, and the trees and the flowers all around him were bursting with life, and as he expanded his fine chest to take in the sweet air he knew that he was as full of vigorous and clean life as anything in all creation. Then, an ever-pres-

ent needle point of pain pricking his consciousness, came the thought that his days now were few. Then he entered the house.

There was nothing about it or its occupants to indicate the year of doom had come. The rooms were large, sweet and cheery. Various kinds of flowers in vases lent their fragrance, and as the master of the house appeared in the doorway of the sitting-room his mother came to meet him with a smile and a kiss. He handed the letter he had brought to his sister — it was for her — and laid aside his hat and gloves.

"Oh, Mother, she's coming!" suddenly exclaimed Esther. "Duke, she's the dearest girl in the world!"

"Except one," replied Espy, gravely, coming to her and placing his hand gently on her head. "When does she arrive, little sister?"

"Let's see. 'I will start to-morrow.' — Then she will get here to-morrow! Isn't that fine?"

"Rather. And does your old brother have to play the beau?"

"Meet her at the station and bring her home. That's all I ask. She'll do the rest."

This with a decided nod of the head which indicated the speaker had no doubt whatever of the ability of the visitor to captivate.

When the blasting story was told him which all his male forebears had heard in turn at the age of twenty-five, Marmaduke Espy became a changed man. Inheriting a rollicking nature, he had lived a free and joyous life in his youth, but when his eyes were opened he grew thoughtful and reserved in demeanor. Very gradually the idea had come to him that he should not marry. He could not understand why the line should have been perpetuated all these years, when this horrible legacy must be handed down to each succeeding offspring. Not content with hearsay merely, he had investigated for himself, and had found the chain of disaster unbroken. Accurate records had been kept in the family archives, and the evidence was indisputable. He, like all the others, must go when the fateful year was reached. For a time the temptation to lead a dissolute and careless life entered in, but he quickly put this aside. He had his mother

to think of, and his young sister. His duty was to make them as comfortable as he could against the coming of that relentless day. So he had outlined a policy of living consistent with the blood of a gentleman, and had held to it unswervingly. And he firmly resolved that the name should pass with him. He could not understand why those who had gone before could have been so selfish. He had no right to existence; scores of others before him had been better off unborn. When this question had been firmly settled to his satisfaction, his fate troubled him but little. He lived with a keen sense of right and justice always before him, and endeavored to make the way easy and bright for those dependent upon him.

His sister's friend did not work immediate havoc with his affections, as Esther had anticipated, and hoped. But she was an unusual girl, or woman, for there was that in her blue eyes which showed that she had seen and known things. Her hair was yellow as ripened wheat, her nose was straight and her lips not too full, but it was her eyes which brought the eyes of Marmaduke back again and again. He could no more understand or solve them than he could tell why violets were blue, but there was some subtle, elusive, insistent call in them. It seemed her soul spoke through them to his soul. As the days passed, and he came to be with her more and more, vague and unaccustomed dreamings began to disturb him. At night when he slept semi-barbaric panoramas would flit before his vision, and frequently bloodshed and death would conclude the blurred pageant. Figures moved before him across a background entirely unfamiliar; he passed under turreted walls and through vast corridors, and once he was in a huge banquet hall of some medieval castle, and saw a stern-faced man drive a golden-haired woman forth with biting words of scorn. And the man was in some way like himself, and the woman was like the guest beneath his roof. When he was awake, he attributed all this to the approach of his doomday. It was a premonition; a warning to him to prepare himself.

The last week in June came, and the wheat harvest was garnered. The farm was in perfect condition, and everything was in order. Marmaduke had been with his attorney two whole days, getting his affairs in shape to leave them. For his forty-

first birthday came on the first day of July, at ten o'clock at night. Any second now the stroke might fall. Seldom indeed had an Espy lived the full time allotted by the curse. Marmaduke could not understand why he had been spared so long, but he was grateful for life, because it meant so much to him. Another week would see the end, and he began to wonder in what shape it would come. He tried to picture the time and manner of his death, and he prayed he might be alone when the stroke fell. When he was in the house his mother and sister watched him with hungry, wistful eyes, and touched him with their hands under the slightest provocation. He bore the ordeal of waiting bravely and patiently, and was merry with his loved ones.

It was during this last week his feelings underwent a swift and radical change towards Edith Knoll. Love awoke like a flash of light in the still places of his soul, and the slender, yellow-haired girl became the embodiment of all perfections. Then he rebelled at his fate. Resentment found place with love in his heart, when he thought how his Nemesis had allowed him to live until this moment, had brought, as it were, the cup of all earthly happiness within an inch of his lips, only to dash it to the ground when he bent his head to drink. Now he wanted to live, whereas before he had schooled himself to meet the inevitable. And still the sword remained poised, while the days passed.

The last one came. The first of July dawned beautifully bright, and seemed anything but a day of sacrifice. Marmaduke arose at his accustomed hour, bathed, and dressed himself with care, as a condemned criminal might awaking to his last morning. Never had he seemed so full of life, so perfectly well. He slipped slightly on the stair as he started down to breakfast, and smiled grimly as he righted himself and descended with his hand on the rail. A fall might easily have proven fatal to a man of his build. An unnatural silence was upon the house and its inmates as the day wore on. The mother hovered about her son with white face and trembling hands, while Esther walked nervously from room to room. Marmaduke was calm. He did not leave the house, and was at his desk most of the morning. Early in the afternoon he started to ride out, but Mrs. Espy clung to him, and begged him to stay with her. He consented.

The long summer day merged at length into twilight, and the tense nerves of the watching women almost reached the breaking point. Edith came down to the evening meal arrayed in the most peculiar gown. It was very ornate, and suggested a past age. The meal was a silent one, and was partaken of sparingly, and with great effort. It was eight o'clock when they arose from the table. There were two hours left. Marmaduke approached Mrs. Espy, and took both her hands.

"Mother, I have something to say to Miss Knoll in private. With her consent she and I will go to the front porch for a short time. I will be with you again soon."

He turned towards Edith as he spoke, and she bowed her head. Kissing his mother on the forehead, Marmaduke went to Miss Knoll's side, and together they passed out to the spot he had named, and sat down. The night was very still, and the sky was thick with stars. He began speaking at once, declaring his love in a plain, straightforward manner.

"You will be doubly surprised at this," he concluded, "when you hear that which is to follow. According to a precedent which has not failed for two and a half centuries, I have less than two hours to live. But if I can know in my last hour that you love me, death will not be so hard."

He could not see that her face was strained, and that one hand clutched her heart, because they sat in the dark. But her voice had a catch in it as she replied.

"What is it? Tell me what it is that makes you say you have less than two hours to live?"

"It has never been told before until the marriage vows were spoken," he answered.

"But that cannot be with us. The time is too short. But when I say that I love you, will not that answer?"

He felt for her face with both his hands, put it between them, and drawing her forward, kissed her lips.

"Let this be our betrothal, then. Now you shall hear."

And straightway he told the tale which had never been spoken before until the marriage vows were said at the altar. She heard him through silently, though now and then an unseen shiver would pass over her. As his voice ceased nine o'clock sounded.

"God of mercy!" she breathed, in a loud, terror-laden whisper, and the second time, barely audibly — "God of mercy!"

With a sudden, quick movement she took his hand in hers, and he was conscious that her flesh burned like fire.

"Oh, listen! listen!" she began, in hurried tones, "for the time is short! I have a story to tell. A story for the testing of your love. I'll make it brief. I'm not the sweet, innocent girl I was when your sister knew me at school. I married secretly — a good, great-hearted man. We were desperately poor, and I thought he tired of me. Then in a moment of grief and folly such as might come to the best of us, I left him and fled with a handsome, dashing youth of the world. The reaction came quickly, and when I realized what I had done I went back to find my husband, but he had killed himself. Then my father took me in. Oh, it's a horrible story! It was all hushed up, and few knew of it. But I am an impostor here, and this confession is due to you, first of all. But that is not all — oh, can't you see that is not all?"

The fingers of her hands were writhing like tongues of flame over his hands.

"Is not that enough?" he asked, in dead tones.

"But the story you told me! The story of the first Marmaduke!"

"Yes," he answered, his head sunk forward.

"My name!" she rambled on, in a semi-hysterical voice. "Do you not know my name?"

"Edith Knoll," he replied, dully.

"Knoll — Noel — yes! But my middle name is Godiva!"

Marmaduke raised his head, and his big body trembled so that the bench upon which they sat creaked on the floor.

"*Godiva! Godiva!*"

"Yes! — Oh, can't you see? I came from the other line! The Noels have come to be Knolls in this country, and in my house the tale of wrong has been preserved all these years! And so at last Marmaduke Espy and Godiva Noel face each other again. This time her sin is real; then it was not. You have been spared to the last hour! Oh, can't you see?"

"That I can right the wrong of my progenitor, and lift the curse? God, it is true! Come, you shall be my wife!"

She arose with him, and he gathered her close to him. In the silence which followed, the sound of sobbing was heard within.

"My mother weeps for her son," said Marmaduke. "She does not know that sorrow has turned to laughter. Let us go to her."

Side by side, their arms around each other, they stood before the mother and sister, while Marmaduke told all the story. Godiva's head was bowed upon his shoulder in shame.

"Sir Marmaduke sent her away without cause," the man's voice concluded, "and I take her back, and pardon her. Mother, sister, your son and brother is saved to you."

As he ceased speaking the hall clock chimed ten. While the strokes were sounding a chilly breath blew upon all within the room, and the air was winnowed as by the passage of wings. But when it was gone Marmaduke and Godiva stood breast to breast, and his forty-first year had come.